Disclosure Would Help Russia, Hill Told

Colby Firm on Fund Secrecy

8/5/76

By William Greider
Washington Post Staff Writer

Director William E. Colby of the Central Intelligence agency pleaded with congressional investigators yesterday not to force public exposure of any CIA budget figures, lest that information help the Russians.

In return, one congressman accused Colby of "playing God" with classified information and another suggested that the CIA wants to keep its budget secret from the American taxpayers rather than the Soviets.

Colby appeared before the House intelligence committee, which is reviewing the secret fiscal affairs of the federal government's various intelligence agencies, programs said to cost billions of dollars though the official budget total has never been disclosed.

The CIA director, who has overall responsibility for coordinating intelligence budgets and programs with other agencies, warned that "the agency's budget must be kept secret and . . . revealing it would inevitably weaken our intelligence."

Even if an overall total figure was the only information made public, that would still be helpful to U.S. adversaries, Colby said, because they could chart trends over a period of years and derive valuable conclusions about the secret directions of American spying.

"Moreover," Colby said, "once the budget total was revealed, the demand for details probably would grow. What does it include? What does it exclude? Why did it go up?

See COLBY, A5, Col. 1

By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Colby: "Intelligence . . . will not work if exposed."

Colby [illegible] On Fund[illegible] Secrecy

COLBY, From A1

Why did it go down? Is it worth it? How does it work?

"There would be revelations, even revelations of facts not in themselves particularly sensitive but which would gradually reduce the unkown to a smaller and smaller part of the total, permitting foreign intelligence services to concentrate their efforts in the areas where we would least like to attract their attention."

Rep. Otis Pike (D-N.Y.), among others, was not impressed by Colby's defense of total secrecy. The committee chairman noted that the Soviet Union already knows a lot about American intelligence programs because the United States is an open society, Colby agreed.

"So in the final analyis," Pike said, "the people who really don't know it are the taxpayers who pay [illegible]."

Colby argued that Americans will tolerate secrecy if secrecy is required for an effective, governmental action such as secret voting or secret grand jury sessions. "Intelligence is such a process," he said. "It is important to our country and it will not work if it is exposed."

Pike noted that only 38 senators and representatives among the 535 members of Congress are told about the secret budgets. Thus, 93 per cent of the Congress is in the dark. The money is hidden in 20 categories of Defense Department spending and one State Department account.

Pike suggested to Colby that "you fear that the secret you have would become known to the public if all members of Congress knew them."

"I do so fear," Colby replied.

That prompted an angry blast from Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.) who asked: "What makes you the person who decided he can play God?"

"Mr. Dellums, I am not playing God," Colby said. "I am only enforcing the laws which the Congress passed to protect those secrets needed to preserve that free society which you and I both want."

Dellums said the CIA director is putting himself above elected representatives and is using "National security" as a shield just as the Nixon White House did in the Watergate scandal.

On the subject of assassinations, Colby reiterated his position that he is opposed to government-sponsored assassination of foreign leaders though he said he would have supported such aan effort aimed at Hitler in World War II.

Some committee members were reluctant to go into executive session with Colby because they said their closed meeting last Friday with James Lynn, White House director of management and budget, produced evasive answers and no information.

Lynn repeatedly told the committee in public that he would be happy to answer many questions in private, but Pike said Lynn reneged once the committee met privately with him.

"The result could only be described as acutely disappointing," Pike said. The committee then voted 6 to 5 to go into closed hearings with Colby, though the chairman was among those who voted against it.